

# ZOLA'S 'HUMAN BEAST' IN FICTION OUTDONE IN REAL LIFE

JOSEPH VACHER, WHO HAS SLAIN NINETEEN WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN FRANCE, IS A STARTLING FULFILMENT OF THE GREAT FRENCH NOVELIST'S ALMOST INCREDIBLE CONCEPTION.

## ZOLA'S PORTRAIT OF THE HUMAN MONSTER.

From Emile Zola's Famous Novel, "La Bete Humaine."

JACQUES LANTIER fell down by the railroad and broke into convulsive sobs. Oh, God! it had come back—that hideous disease of which he thought himself cured.

"Kill a woman! Kill a woman!" That was the cry that had rung in his ears from the dawn of manhood. As other youths beginning life dream of loving a woman, his yearning had always been to slaughter one. For he could not deceive himself. He had seized the shears to plunge them into Flore's bosom, as he saw it white and warm before him. So strong was the desire still that if he had not clutched the grass he would have been forced to run back and cut her throat. Kill her! that Flore whom he had seen grow up and whom he knew to love him so devotedly. His twisted fingers burrowed into the earth; his sobs rent his throat in his paroxysm of frightful despair.

Still he tried to calm himself, to understand himself. Why was he different from others? His family was hardly normal; many members of it had a queer streak. At times he had felt a strange loss of equilibrium, as if something had knocked holes in him through which his being escaped in the midst of a great cloud that distorted everything.

He remembered that he was hardly sixteen when the disease first appeared. A little girl with whom he was playing fell down and he beat her savagely. The next year he remembered having sharpened a knife to plunge in the neck of a little blonde. She had a very plump, rosy neck, and he selected the spot, a brown mark behind the ear, where he would stab. Then, like a great nightmare, there passed before his mind all the women he had yearned to murder—women encountered casually in the street and in other public places. One especially he recalled, a bride who sat next him at the theatre and laughed very joyously. He had to leave the theatre to avoid slaughtering her.

What hatred could he have against these women, since he did not know them? he asked himself. When the desire to kill came over him, it was always with a sudden paroxysm of blind fury, in which he felt a thirst to avenge some very old injury, which he could not exactly remember. Could it be that this was the inherited result of an injury done by women to his forefathers, the resentment accumulated from man to man since the first infidelity in the depths of the caverns?

At this moment he felt in his fury an absolute necessity to struggle with a woman and subdue her and throw her dead on her back, like the prey that one wild beast has snatched from another.

Jacques found in Severine a woman whom he believed he loved truly. Through her he told himself that he had conquered the fearful mental disease that had poisoned his life. He could behold her without for an instant wishing to plunge a knife into her throat.

Then she confessed to him how her husband had forced her to take part in the murder of old Grandmorin. As his mind dwelt on the bloody deed the old desire to kill crept back, but he escaped from it.

After that she urged him to kill her husband, who was the only obstacle to their perfect happiness. He consented, and she made all the plans for the deed. As his mind dwelt on blood the old madness took possession of Jacques completely, and it was turned against her.

Suffocated, he could breathe no more. The cries of a multitude in his brain prevented him from hearing. Tongues of fire behind his ears burnt holes in his head, reached to his arms, his legs, drove him from his own body to make way for the other—the invading beast. His hands no longer belonged to him in the intoxication of feeling this woman in his possession.

Jacques, without turning, had reached for the knife with his right hand. For an instant he stopped, clasping it in his hand. He fixed his mad eyes on Severine; he only felt a desire to fling her dead on the ground, like the prey one wild beast had snatched from another.

She turned up her face with supplicating tenderness, showing her bare neck. He, seeing this white flesh, as in a flash of fire, raised his hand with the knife. She had already seen the flash of the knife; she fell back, gaping with terror and surprise.

"Jacques, Jacques! Why should you?" His teeth clenched, he said not a word, but followed her. A short struggle brought them near the table. She fell back, defenceless.

"Why? Why?" she moaned. His hand fell and nailed the question in her throat. As he struck he twisted the weapon, merely to give a fearful satisfaction to his hand. It was the same blow that had killed President Grandmorin in the same place, with the same fury. Did she cry?

He heard the heavy breathing of an animal, of a wild boar or a lion. He became calm. It was his own breathing. At last he was happy—he had killed! Yes, he had done it. A mad joy, a tremendous pleasure elated him, resulting from the full satisfaction of his eternal desire. He felt a great pride, an increase of his masculine sovereignty. This woman whom he had killed he possessed, as he had long yearned to possess her, so absolutely that he had annihilated her. She no longer existed.

Ah! not to be a coward, to satiate one's self, to drive in the knife! Obscurely the idea had grown in him; not a day, not an hour but it had progressed to the inevitable end.

years, according to the information of the public prosecutor, is as follows:

Clementine Grangeon, aged fourteen, 1888.  
Philomene Lozere, aged eighteen, 1889.  
Marie Terrier, aged sixteen, 1890.  
Louise Marcel, aged thirteen, 1891.  
Attalie Pedron, aged fourteen, 1891.  
Nanette Poirier, aged eleven, 1891.  
Gabrielle Maret, aged fourteen, 1892.

Severine Troncon, aged fourteen, 1893.  
Armande Rosier, aged seventeen, 1893.  
Suzanne Flaret, aged fourteen, 1894.  
Lizette Thiriot, aged fourteen, 1894.  
Augustine Mortureux, aged seventeen, 1895.  
Widow Morand, aged sixty-five, 1895.  
Victor Portaller, aged sixteen, 1895.  
Pierre Massot Pellet, aged fourteen, 1895.

Marie Lorut, aged nineteen, 1896.  
Rosine Rodier, aged fourteen, 1896.  
Pierre Laurent, aged fourteen, 1897.  
Therese Ply, aged nineteen, 1897.

This makes a total of nineteen murders. It will be noted that thirteen of the victims are of the female sex, and all but about three extremely young. Fourteen is the average age of Vacher's victims. There is, besides, evidence for a number of charges of assaults on women against Vacher.

Vacher received a good education from the Marist Fathers, of Saint-Genis-Laval, in the department of the Rhone. He graduated from there when he was eighteen. At school his conduct was generally good. He performed his compulsory military service with the Sixtieth Regiment of the line at Besancon, after which he became a non-commissioned officer. At this time he became engaged, but his fiancée refused to marry him, and from that moment his orgy of blood begins. He fired twice at her with his revolver, missing her, and then put two balls into his own head. After this he spent two brief periods in different insane asylums.

Then he began a wandering life in the country, the fearful mystery of which has just been revealed.

Dr. Garnier, one of the greatest alienists in France made some striking observations on Vacher in an interview given before the latest murders had been unearthed. "This man," said the great alienist, "certainly holds the record for the number of his crimes. I have known epileptics who have killed seven or eight persons, but all in one scene of carnage. But I know of no precedent to Vacher, who, in the space of three years and without hurrying, has killed eight persons. He will, perhaps, confess to many more."

"What is your opinion of his mental condition?" was asked of the Doctor. "It is not yet clear to me. Certain phrases attributed to him would make alienists consider him a man suffering from a mania of persecution and wishing to avenge himself on society. But considering all the crimes and their method I am inclined to think that he is under the influence of a peculiar homicidal mania."

"Two facts are to be noted. When he kills a boy he mutilates him. The homicidal impulse is accompanied by a frightful mania."

"I don't think Vacher is a mystic maniac. When he speaks of his inspiration coming from God, he merely means that a mysterious and invisible power forces him to kill."

The Sunday Journal is indebted to the illustrated weekly supplement of the Courrier de Lyon for its portraits of the victims of Vacher.



EMILE ZOLA, THE LITERARY CREATOR OF THE HUMAN BEAST, IN HIS STUDIO.

From a photograph.

THE human beast has appeared in real life. His name is Joseph Vacher, and his doings are at present under investigation by Monsieur Fourquet, Juge d'Instruction, at Belley, near Lyons, in France.

Vacher is possessed with an overpowering desire to kill women. He confesses to twelve murders, and there is strong evidence that he has committed nineteen. Most of his victims have been helpless little girls, but in his last for blood he has destroyed a few boys.

In "La Bete Humaine" Zola analyzed a man who from hereditary causes developed with manhood a desire to kill women. Vacher is such a man, but Zola would never have dared to make his creation kill as many as the human beast of real life. He would have been ridiculed. The real beast is infinitely more horrible, more unbelievable than the creation of one of the most fearful works of fiction ever written.

For nearly ten years Vacher has wandered over the centre and south of France, seeking pasture lands where the cattle are usually left in the care of young girls and boys. These children are often miles from human dwellings. Vacher would attack them, commit terrible atrocities on them, kill them, and finally mutilate their bodies horribly with his knife.

It is barely a month ago that Vacher

was arrested at Tournon, in the Ardeche, for an offence against public order. The Judge was then struck by a strong resemblance between him and the reported appearance of the man who murdered one of the little shepherdesses.

The Judge questioned him—in France the Juge d'Instruction does such things—and he confessed. He made a strange bombastic statement to the effect that he was inspired by Heaven to commit the murders. He confessed to twelve.

Then the horrible facts began to accumulate from all parts of the country. Mothers told the awful story of the murder and mutilation of their children.

Therese Ply, a girl of nineteen, was apparently Vacher's last victim. On April 5 of this year she was carrying home provisions to her mother's cottage, between Vienne-le-Chateau and Binayville, on the borders of the Departments of the Meuse and the Marne. At five o'clock in the evening she passed through the forest of Arzonne. Vacher sprang from the bushes and attacked her.

When her body was discovered the next day her head was nearly severed from her body, and she had received thirteen knife gashes. She had evidently struggled fiercely, for her fingers had been nearly cut off by clutching the knife.

The list of Vacher's murders and their



SEVERINE TRONCON



CLEMENTINE GRANGEON



SUZANNE FLARET.



GABRIELLE MARET



NANETTE POIRIER



WIDOW MORAND



AUGUSTINE MORTUREUX



MARIE LORUT



ROSENE RODIER



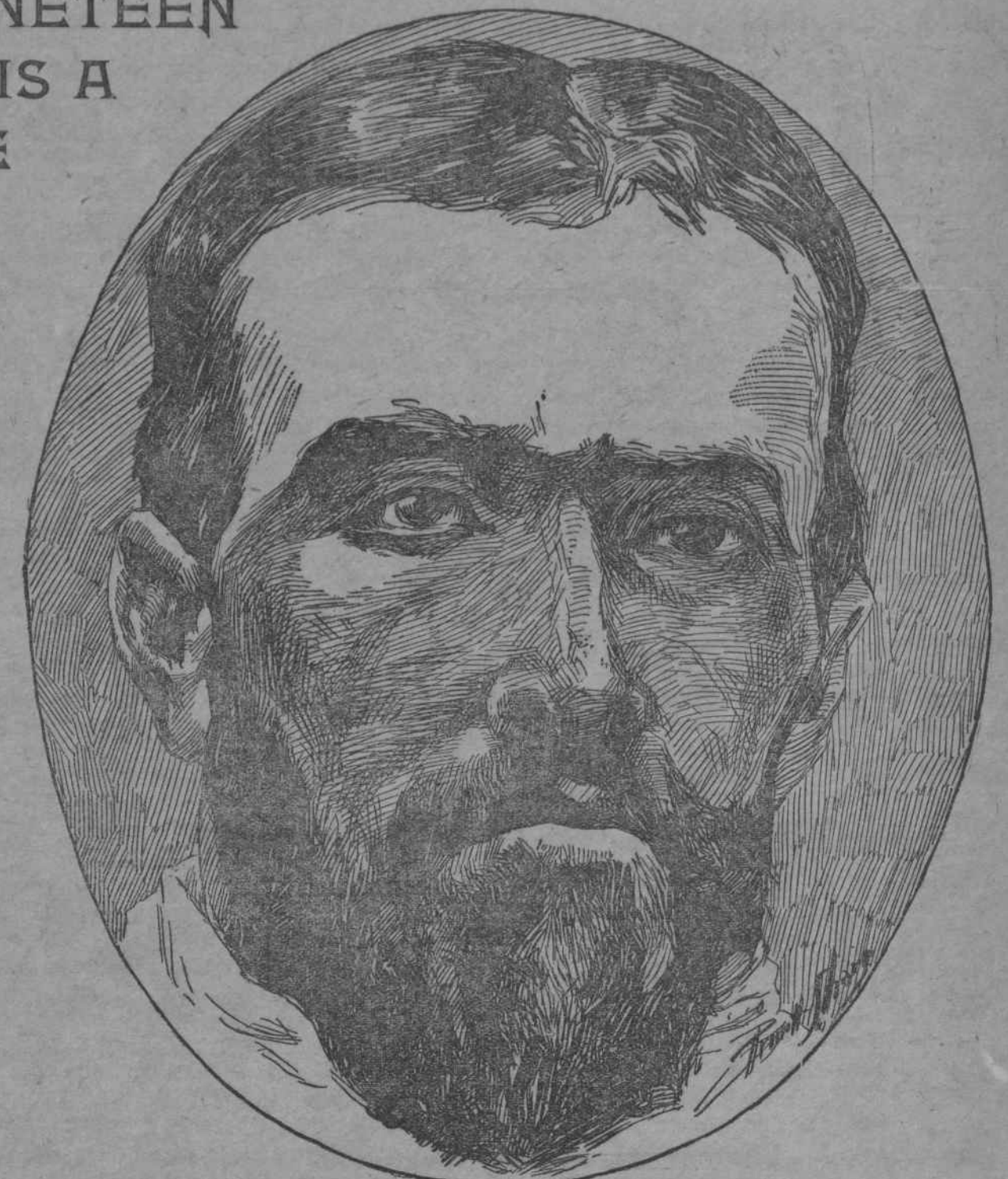
THERESE PLY.



ATTALIE PEDRON.



LOUISE MARCEL



JOSEPH VACHER, THE HUMAN BEAST OF REAL LIFE.

From a photograph in L'illustration.



PHILOMENE LOZERE



MARIE TERRIER